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ABSTRACT

A few new topics have been introduced, but curriculum design and instructional practice in the basic disciplines is much the same now as 25 years ago. A main source of change in curriculum and instruction is in instructional materials, but they are largely neglected when discussing curriculum development and instructional strategies. Education is overwhelmingly influenced not by what goes on in the classroom, but by the inputs that are brought to the classroom by children. The first external force that has made a profound difference in the child that teachers deal with is a radical redefinition in family makeup. The second profound external force is the influence of television. It would seem that instructional materials investigations should focus on those areas where external forces have the greatest impact on classroom practice. Two areas that should receive priority in curriculum research, therefore, are 1) the areas of instructional materials and curriculum design in parenting, and 2) instructional materials that confront the needs for a visual curriculum that develops a sophisticated, analytical user of visual media (particularly television). (Author/JG)

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Curriculum Scholarship:

Needed Research and Development

for the Creation of Instructional Materials

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Curriculum Scholarship: Needed Research and Development for the Creation of Instructional Materials

This paper is premised on four propositions: (1) curriculum and instruction in schools today does not differ radically on its assumptions which guide practice from the curriculum and instructional practices of 25 years ago. The principal modes of instruction that prevail: teacher organization and assignment--student response--and time devoted to subjects remains in about the same ratio and proportions as prevailed 25 years ago. (2) Curriculum, its organization while changed in content in some areas has not changed in its format or translation into classroom practice. (3) It is the belief of the author of this paper that schools will not radically change their posture in the next several years. Teacher and student instructional relations will remain similar. The amount of time devoted to subjects will not be radically redistributed and students will continue to spend about the same amount of time on the major activity of classrooms, working on instructional materials, as they have in the past. We may see some changes in the pupil/teacher ratio. And one cannot discount that we may get radical intervention from rather massive federal funding for handicapped children. But unless these interventions are of a greater and more drastic nature than we have had in the past I do not see that they will restructure the schools in a radical matter. (4) It is <u>not</u> the thesis of this paper that there has been no

change in schools for one can without having even to select evidence, rather quickly, document that there has been a difference in the way education has affected children and how it has been and is now viewed by society.

What has changed then is the context in which education takes place and the greatly heightened influence of external forces on education. These external educative forces create within the culture a new curriculum, and have come to dominate an older curriculum emphasis supported by society which carried a value system chiefly through the schools. These external forces threatened the long held value of formal education to build a rational citizenry capable of existing in a free society. If external educative forces are promoting a curriculum which attacks long held values, can the school respond to these cultural assaults which undermine formal schooling to the extent that they threaten to replace its influence in the broader society as an agency for defining normative behavior. Can the school become a dominate educative force once again as a major element in upholding and building cultural values which are necessary for sustaining a society where the individual can have freedom of choice and maximum liberty. At this time it appears rather clearly that the schools are becoming increasingly impotent in developing the curriculum which would guarantee the free man that John Stuart Mill saw as vital to the working of a free society. It is the purpose of this paper to point to some specific direct programs to undertake in curriculum research and evaluation

to explore how schools can become a more forceful advocate instead of remaining passive to cultural drift that overpowers core values which have long been at the heart of a comprehensive educational system devoted to maintenance of a free society.

From these premises flow an analysis and recommendations for active curriculum investigation in the next decade. Before launching into these prescriptions, I must sketch some limitations. I have not attempted to be all inclusive in prescribing curriculum investigations and have concentrated on the K-12 curriculum. Due to limitations of time, I'm not addressing the special problems of vocational education, nor have I included special education.

Curriculum and Instructional Change in Its Institutionalization within the School

The past two decades have been a time when innovations have screamed--or in many cases squeaked as educators sought the oil of foundation or federal funds. A cataloguing of these "innovations" would be useless for this audience since many of you, just as I, have lived through the roller coaster educational scene when to be without innovative practices in a school system was to be condemned to the scrap heap of obsolescence. However noting a few of these reminds us of the fleeting nature of curriculum innovations, as in a number of cases even faint shadows no longer remain of their once towering presence. How many of you remember airborne television and the great promises it held

for its broadcasting superior curriculum with no lesser beneficial effect than sunshine on the corn crop of the midwest? Team teaching, interaction analysis, and more recently the open classroom are also "innovations" which have come, claimed adherents, and are now part of the educational literature but not institutionalized in large scale practice. The French have a saying that the more things change, the more they remain the same. In my advancing years I find this to be a handy but not particularly comforting truth.

Our extensive work in classrooms which employs direct observation in the projects conducted in the Office of Evaluation Research at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle over the past eight years, finds that the way in which classrooms are instructed and the curriculum becomes interpreted does not change very much from school to school. Teachers and their influence still are the dominant factors in the classroom and whether you have an educative process going on is still highly contingent upon the idiosyncratic performance of individual teachers. In general we find the teacher still organizes the classroom in some fashion and directs and teaches lessons. While individualized instruction is the current rage, entire classes still work together and while children may be working on separate assignments, they still pace through the same material. Small groups may exist in the classrooms but teachers are largely using them for purposes of pacing, one group going slower, one going at an average rate, and one going faster; but the exposure to ideas as set in the curriculum and carried through instruction, is pretty much the same. The overall organization of

curriculum and its emphasis has not changed and this is particularly so in the elementary school with most of the time being spent on tool subjects. A few new topics have been introduced but the cast of curriculum design and instructional practice in the basic disciplines retains much of the characteristics of 25 years ago. The time spent still finds that the bulk of commitment is to basic subjects, and other teaching areas which are in the elementary and the secondary schools are seen as being peripherial interests as far as the teacher and their organization of the classroom is concerned.

A main source of change in curriculum and instruction is in instructional materials. In general it is our observation that teachers and students are very heavily wedded to the instructional materials that they use in the classroom. These materials serve as a focal point for organizing day-to-day work and are the chief source of the knowledge which is evaluated in the classroom. Our evidence suggests that an estimate made several years ago is still accurate, that students spend 70%-80% of their classroom time working on instructional materials and 90% of homework-time. As the data becomes clear that time on task is a significant variable in determination of achievement, the wide spread neglect in the study of what happens in the black box of the interaction of students and instructional materials remains one of the great mysteries in educational research.

It is our finding in the Office of Evaluation Research after having done numerous workshops with teachers and administrators around the United States on the analysis of instructional materials that there is a low level of understanding of the curriculum and instructional design of materials even when producers have made great effort to improve these designs through learner verification information data and provided technical assistance through written manuals to aid practitioners. Despite findings that classrooms are fundamentally materials centered and removal of these materials would mean a serious disruption of the educative process, they are largely neglected when discussing curriculum development and instructional strategies. Materials budgets are not a large source of costs in the overall financial budget and it is safe to say there is equal parsimony in the thought given to their use. We have found in working with building administrators that they are particularly limited in their own perception of the significance of materials and, moreover, exhibit low interest in how materials contribute to the operation and functioning of their school's curriculum.

In sum, what has happened is that schools have largely persisted in the same themes of curriculum, on modes of teacher/pupil interaction, in the organizing influence of materials on classrooms, and have continued the fundamental outlines of practice that have marked the schools for many, many, years. What has changed however is the context in which education is now being conducted and the inputs of children from external forces and

this is where I next direct my attention.

External Influences of Family Change and Television

Education is overwhelmingly influenced at this time by not what goes on in the classroom but by the inputs that are brought to the classroom by children. We all probably have our own itemized list of forces that are influencing children's behavior and accounting for much of the output of the classroom. Nevertheless I would point to two overriding developments which are defying the efforts of educators to carry out the fundamental role that schools have long played in the culture, and that have made them less effective agencies even though they still are the one institution that touches almost all the children. The first external force that has made a profound difference in the child who comes to school and that the teachers deal with, is a radical redefinition in family makeup. We have coming into the school, children that are from homes that are increasingly headed by one-parent families. In these homes financial and economic problems predominate and the struggle for day to day existence is of major concern. The input that the school receives from the child's external environment is less directed towards learning than survival and a child comes who is far less socialized and less ready to learn. In some schools in which we are working at the Office of Evaluation Research, the modal child coming to those schools lives in substandard and overcrowded housing which, with other environmental influences, spawns behavioral characteristics which are inimical to learning: hyperactivity , overaggressive-

ness, hostility and low skill in interpersonal relationships all of which contribute to a learning environment characterized by noise and chaos as the teacher attempts to impart traditional subjects. We have several good studies of the breakup of the family unit and of the lower socialization which is coming to many American families and I won't bother to recount them here (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, and Johnson, 1975). At one parent-child center where we have worked it is well documented, at least to my satisfaction, that parental education must be carried on before the traditional learning of the school can be imparted. We have found not only that the student benefits more from working with the parent directly than concentrating effort on the student, but once certain parental skills are instilled there is student achievement gain and carry over of the gain for the other siblings. The characteristics of home environment which require a parental curriculum moving parallel to the traditional curriculum of the school are specifically known. In general they involve one-parent families, large families, low income families, and families that have younger than average mothers with lower than average educations. What is hopeful is that they respond so readily to the school's interest in parental education and are able to benefit from the assistance. The discouraging element is the resistance on the part of public officials and even school boards to develop adequate parental education which is a prerequisite to fulfilling the formal task of the school in providing the traditional outcomes possible from curriculum.

A second set of external forces which have had extraordinarily profound influence on the ability of the schools to function, are suspected of having shaped the outputs of the schools to the point that we see yearly decrements in achievement as measured by standardized tests. James Coleman points out in a recent study these have consistently slipped downward over the last eight years. (Coleman, 1976.) While there are many alternate hypotheses that could be explored, one on family size seems to have some promise of holding over large populations; it would be my contention that the decrement in achievement is especially high for those children who spend enormous amounts of time viewing television and they as a group have contributed significantly to a loss in achievement as measured by standardized tests in the schools. While one might argue that standardized tests are not an accurate measure of what is taught in the schools, they nevertheless are indicators of important learnings that are seen as a primary responsibility of the school, and the learnings in the tool subjects are not likely to be stumbled over and learned in an unsystematic curriculum in other realms of life.

The loss of achievement is serious, but of even greater concern is the influence television has had in its attack on central core values that have been central to the curriculum. I believe it is extremely difficult to refute Roger Rosenblatt's thesis that the thrust of television programs in general is an attack on rationality and would substitute for life of the

mind an interpretation of the world exclusively through the sensing realm. (Rosenblatt, 1976.) It scarcely makes much difference whether you view so called "adult" programs or the "kid vid", the theme is constant. The individual is overwhelmed as a rule by forces beyond his control, confusion and illogic reign, the only settlement that is possible is through power. The stronger, the more vicious, the more sudden the ending, the more might becomes right (Elmendorf, 1976). Exposure to television which is embedded in a year-round curriculum, which ironically the schools have long sought, has induced I believe in our children a state of mind which places the verbally mediated curriculum long used in the school at an enormous handicap in the competition for citizenship education and normative standards that make for a free society. We have considerable evidence that students who expend 3 to 6 hours a day viewing television have short attention spans, are passive, low in creativity, non reactive, and are difficult to engage indepth over any period of time on complex subjects. It is my view that perhaps this is the greatest single challenge ever presented to the schools and one which if not met successfully will lead to the influence of the schools becoming increasingly diminished. Overall, cultural norms may well be set by those who program television and whose estimate of the human destiny are not particularly uplifting.

Due to what children bring to school the job of teaching has become increasingly more difficult. It is my impression that staff morale in general is low, teachers feel overwhelmed by

the students in the tasks of teaching that they face. Thus while education has always been seen as a Sisyphean mission, it is more so at this period of time than it has been in the past due to the strong influence of competing educative forces outside the school. Let us then turn to the third part of this paper which looks at curriculum and instruction research in the next several years which would assist the school in its efforts to lift up the culture to the point that it would enhance the quality of living for all.

Recommended Areas for Scholarly Inquiry

Curriculum development in a school system is handicapped in many ways by the hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations which put serious limits on long range curriculum development work. In addition many of the massive efforts have demonstrated that they do not have significant consequences for day to day practice. For this reason it is suggested that we focus in on the elements that have the most direct consequences for student learning and for teacher's classroom organization and teaching, instructional materials. It would seem that instructional materials investigations should focus on those areas where external forces have the greatest impact for classroom practice. What I am suggesting is attention to two broad areas where curriculum materials should be developed and researched if the schools are going to have an effect on the direction that our culture takes. Continual neglect is likely to leave our societal

direction approximating an unguided missile which is launched by television programmers whose interests are short-sighted to the point of being indifferent to the consequences on normative behavior in the society. Two areas which should receive priority in curriculum research are: (1) the areas of instructional materials and curriculum design in parenting and (2) instructional materials which confront the needs for a visual curriculum which develops a sophisticated , analytic user of visual media, television particularly,and develops a citizenry able to transcend the propagandistic pandering and builds the ability to exercise free rational choice.

I would suggest that investigations in these two areas would mean recasting curriculum materials in a far different form than we have seen them in the past. We are largely confined in curriculum materials to printed media and the textbook still reigns supreme. While there is an argument that can be made for efficiency in printed media it is only a minor portion of the learning inputs that both children and adults receive. Our uncritical acceptance of the visual images of TV and the failure of children to distinguish between the advertising and programs has fuzzed the line between propaganda and education (Singer, 1975). Even the overblown praise of a recent television program which claimed viewership of over half the households of the nation, "Roots", provides further substantial evidence of the uncritical acceptance of television presentations among a large sector of the educated populace. There is a need for the schools if they are to retain an educative influence in the culture to help the citizenery

at large analyze the visual curriculum presented over television. Whether the television curriculum is uncritically or critically accepted may in large measure whether a citizen can continue to exercise rational free choice in many realms of life. What areas should we investigate? I can only begin to give some broad sketches.

In the first area of parenting, we need to proceed on two fronts: (1) the family and those skills which are a part of successful parenting need systematic introduction into the curriculum; and (2) the school needs to work more directly with families to build parenting skills if children of many families are to have a chance to bring to school those emotional-intellectual capabilities that will allow them to benefit from the formal curriculum. A serious study of the family, its focal significance in the society needs to be developed as a major theme in social studies. How children grow and develop, how emotions are cultivated and the interdependency of each of us on a system and network of interpersonal relationships can be part of the curriculum. Our goal should be to increase childrens' ability to be rational about those areas which are so profoundly affected by the emotions. As Freud said so long ago it is the replacement of id needs with ego, where we are not exploitive of others and enslaved to those primitive feelings which we see exercised in the climate of violence on television. Thus parental education is seen as part and parcel of rational comprehension by children

of human emotion and emotional development. We have strong evidence that indicates that the interpersonal skills in which we relate our emotions to others can be taught. I would call your attention to some of the works of David W. Johnson, Richard DeCharms, and Burton White, as representing efforts which can rapidly be translated into curriculum research in this important area.

As one outstanding example of what curriculum research might do, one area in which we find a serious deficit is in the area of social perception, the inability to interpret the consequences of our behavior on others. Schools and classrooms deal very little with this phenomena, although it can be enhanced and is indeed the most important if not dominant factor, if an individual is to be allowed to function as a free member in a society where interdependence is increasingly important and responsibility to others is a prerequisite to making individual decisions. Our own work at the Office of Evaluation Research finds that small group practice in classrooms where social perception can be cultivated takes very little cognizance of these data and small group practice by teachers is lodged in fairly primitive instructional assumptions that it makes communication easier and the supervision of a child's work more direct.

In the second area of parenting, work with parents is essential. Our experience with child-parent centers in Chicago speaks to the importance of early intervention if improved parenting skills are to have a major influence on the childs learning in school. In the best of these centers children enter at age three and

remain until nine. A staff consisting of a community worker, social worker and child development specialist work with teachers and parents on parenting education through actively engaging parents in the activities of the school. The curriculum involves the parent in developing insights not only into children and child rearing but also into adult behavior and their own motivations. The goal is the fostering of mature personalities--a decidely different end, than the doing your own thing and ignore the consequences on others, which has been promoted by the pop culture. Children's achievement, we find, is tied up with parenting skill development and to achieve the former, the latter must receive priority.

In the seond area, the school's competition with visual curriculum from television, curriculum research needs to give attention to developing an informed viewer, one who does not passively accept and can exert reactive force on the propaganistic efforts which are the driving engine in mass media. One cannot say that the life of the mind figures prominently in most television programs. Rather programs play on the sensory as they strive to hold attention until the real message in the ad is flashed. TV programs substitute a sense of feeling for meaning and attack the rational basis of life. In this denial of rationality we lose our belief in our ability to exercise control over our work, our personal relations, and even meaning in life (Levinson, 1974). For these cultural deficits in our citizenry I find little in the visual curriculum of television that is helpful and much

that is destructive. At this time unfortunately it is a non-competitive media with the exception of Public Broadcasting System which, if viewed educationally, is at best a mixed body of programming. In the classroom our excessive reliance on printed media has developed a curriculum that ignores the visual and its relationship to the development of cognitive processes. Curriculum researchers need to direct attention to building a visual curriculum which attempts to relate more directly to that fundamental cultural goal of the schools, an informed rational citizenry, which is now being ignored. Badly needed is careful research on the outputs that result if we attempt to shape a curriculum for building critical, aware individuals who question rather than passively accept much that comes to them over television. As a task it is enormously complicated by the fact that we are working with very powerful groups who have deep economic interests in maintaining the world of television as it is. As a start I would suggest building a visual curriculum in one area of the school, social studies, which would use exclusively television type productions in an effort to rapidly build critical awareness in the acceptance of visual messages. Much is at stake; the influence of the schools as a general force for developing a better quality of life, establishing cultural norms governing interpersonal relationships and the creation of a political climate where democratic choice and individual liberties can be maintained. In the face of these demands other priorities for curriculum research pale.

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